

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4929
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: A NEW BUGGING AFFAIR DESCENDS ON BONN

REF: (A) MUNICH 226, (B) BONN 490

SUMMARY. STORM CLOUDS CONTINUE TO GATHER OVER THE STRAUSS BUGGING AFFAIR, WHICH POLITICIANS IN ALL CAMPS SENSE HAS GREAT POTENTIAL FOR TROUBLE OR PROFIT, DEPENDING ON THEIR POINT OF VIEW. SO FAR, THE CSU HAS HELD THE INITIATIVE, PULLING THE CDU ALONG IN ITS CAMPAIGN TO IMPUTE COMPLICITY TO OFFICIAL CIRCLES IN BONN. THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT AND ITS COALITION PARTIES HAVE HAD TO REACT TO AN ONSLAUGHT OF CHARGES BASED ON LITTLE EVIDENCE. TWO INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSIONS HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED. DESPITE REFERENCES TO EARLIER BUGGING
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SCANDALS AND TO WATERGATE, NO ONE HAS YET SUGGESTED THAT AMERICAN SERVICES WERE INVOLVED IN THE 1976 WIRETAP. END SUMMARY

1. ON JANUARY 14, THE MUNICH-BASED SUEDEDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG CARRIED EXCERPTS FROM AN ALLEGED TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN CSU CHAIRMAN FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS AND THE EDITOR

OF THE CSU MOUTHPIECE (BAYERNKURIER), WILFRIED SCHARNAGL, IN SEPTEMBER 1976 (REF A). APART FROM THE REVELATION THAT STRAUSS'S PHONE WAS APPARENTLY TAPPED, THE EXCERPTS ALSO IMPLIED THAT STRAUSS HAD DESTROYED LOCKHEED-RELATED DOCUMENTS. STRAUSS HAS SINCE SAID THAT MOST OF THE TRANSCRIPT SEEMS ACCURATE, BUT HE HAS VEHEMENTLY LABELED THE LOCKHEED-RELATED PORTIONS AS FALSE.

2. SINCE THE WEEKEND REVELATIONS, STRAUSS AND OTHER CSU LEADERS HAVE KEPT UP A DRUMBEAT OF CHARGES AGAINST THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND ITS SECURITY SERVICES. STRAUSS HAS CLAIMED THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTRY, IN PARTICULAR STATE SECRETARY FINGERHUT (WHO IS ALREADY UNDER HEAVY CDU/CSU FIRE FOR HIS ALLEGED MISHANDLING OF THE LUTZE/WIEGEL SPY CASE), DIRECTED BOTH THE 1976 CAMPAIGN TO PROVE THAT THE CSU TOOK LOCKHEED BRIBES AS WELL AS THE WIRETAP OF HIS MUNICH PHONE. OTHER CSU LEADERS HAVE CHARGED, DESPITE REPEATED DENIALS BY GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN BOELLING, THAT THE FRG LEARNED OF THE WIRETAP BEFORE STRAUSS DID AND YET FAILED TO INFORM HIM, AND THAT STRAUSS HAS BEEN THE TARGET OF OFFICIAL WIRETAPS FOR SOME TIME.

3. MEETING IN BERLIN, THE CDU/CSU BUNDESTAG CAUCUS CALLED ON JANUARY 17 FOR A BUNDESTAG INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE TO LOOK INTO THE STRAUSS AFFAIR, AND TO EXPLORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MEASURES WHICH THE FRG CAN OR SHOULD TAKE TO PROTECT THE PRIVACY OF ITS CITIZENS. THE FDP WILL PROBABLY GO ALONG WITH THIS DEMAND, AND THE SPD WILL ALSO ACQUIESCE, BUT THE MANDATE AND AGENDA FOR THE COMMITTEE HAVE YET TO BE WORKED OUT.

4. THE FRG FINDS ITSELF ON THE DEFENSIVE IN THIS CASE. TOP OFFICIALS, INCLUDING CHANCELLERY DIRECTOR SCHUELER (WHO SUPERVISES ALL FEDERAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICES) AND BOELLING, HAVE DENIED THAT THERE IS ANY EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT STRAUSS'S CHARGE THAT A FEDERAL SERVICE CONDUCTED THE WIRETAP. BOELLING HAS CAREFULLY NOT RULED OUT THE CHANCE THAT A FEDERAL OFFICIAL MIGHT HAVE ILLEGALLY BUGGED STRAUSS, AND HE HAS ALSO HINTED THAT "OTHER CIRCLES" (UNSPECIFIED) COULD HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE.

5. ON JANUARY 16, THE CHANCELLOR AND THE COALITION PARTIES AGREED TO SET UP AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSION TO EXPLORE ALL QUESTIONS IN THIS AFFAIR. WERNER ERNST, A MAN WITH CLOSE CDU TIES WHO WAS STATE SECRETARY IN THE INTERIOR MINISTRY IN THE 1960'S, WILL CHAIR THIS COMMIS-

SION. ITS MEMBERS WILL COME FROM THE CHANCELLERY; THE
MINISTRIES OF INTERIOR, DEFENSE, POST, AND JUSTICE; AND--
AN INVITATION SO FAR UNANSWERED--BAVARIA. THE FRG
ORIGINALLY WANTED HERMANN MAASEN, ANOTHER MAN WITH CDU

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TIES WHO HAD BEEN STATE SECRETARY IN THE JUSTICE
MINISTRY, TO CHAIR THE COMMISSION. MAASEN, HOWEVER,
DECLINED "FOR PERSONAL REASONS" WHICH REPORTEDLY INVOLVE
FAMILY HEALTH PROBLEMS.

6. SPD AND FDP CIRCLES HAVE WELCOMED THE GOVERNMENT'S
ANNOUNCEMENT THAT IT WILL PROMPTLY SEEK TO CLARIFY ALL
QUESTIONS IN THIS AFFAIR. AT THE SAME TIME, SPD SPOKES-
MEN HAVE REJECTED AS UNFOUNDED ALL CSU ACCUSATIONS OF
FEDERAL MONKEY BUSINESS, AND HAVE CALLED ON THE BAVARIAN
STATE GOVERNMENT TO LEND FULL SUPPORT TO THE INVESTIGA-
TION. PREDICTABLY, SOME SPD DEPUTIES HAVE TRIED TO
DOWNPLAY THE AFFAIR. ONE MADE THE FRIVOLOUS SUGGESTION

THAT THE "BAYERNKURIER" HAD TAPPED ITS OWN PHONE SO THAT
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IT COULD RENDER MORE ACCURATELY THE VIEWS OF THE CSU
CHAIRMAN (SIC). ANOTHER DREW A PARALLEL TO THE
WIRETAP OF A 1974 CONVERSATION BETWEEN HELMUT KOHL AND
KURT BIEDENKOPF, IN WHICH IT WAS LATER CONCLUDED THAT A
PRIVATE DETECTIVE AGENCY -- NOT, AS SOME CDU/CSU CIRCLES
HAD CHARGED, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT -- WAS AT WORK.

7. A COMPLICATING FACTOR IN THE STRAUSS CASE IS THAT THE
BAVARIAN OFFICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE CONSTITUTION
RECEIVED REPORTS IN 1976 (WHEN THE STRAUSS-SCHARNAGL
CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE) THAT EAST EUROPEAN AGENTS WERE
SEEKING TO PENETRATE STRAUSS'S OFFICE, AND ACOR-
DINGLY BEGAN OBSERVATION MEASURES WHICH -- ALLEGEDLY --
DID NOT INCLUDE WIRETAPPING. HOWEVER, AN SPD DEPUTY IN
THE BAVARIAN LANDTAG, ROTHMUND, HAS CALLED FOR A
CLOSED-DOOR INVESTIGATION OF WHETHER THIS "OBSERVATION"
MIGHT IN FACT HAVE SOME CONNECTION WITH THE BUGGING OF
THE SEPTEMBER 1976 PHONE CALL.

8. TO DATE, THIS AFFAIR HAS THROWN UP MANY QUESTIONS
AND YIELDED ALMOST NO ANSWERS.

A. WHATEVER THE CSU BELIEVES, ITS CLAIM THAT
THE WIRETAP IS THE WORK OF BONN-DIRECTED SERVICES
DEMONSTRABLY SERVES ITS EFFORT TO TURN THE LOCKHEED
STORY AGAINST THE SPD/FDP COALITION. WE RECALL THAT
THE CSU ANNOUNCED A FEW WEEKS AGO -- REF B -- THAT IT
WILL RELEASE DOCUMENTATION TO PROVE THAT THE SCHMIDT
GOVERNMENT TRUMPED UP BRIBERY CHARGES AGAINST STRAUSS IN
ORDER TO WIN POINTS DURING THE 1976 ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

B. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY, WHICH IS THE MAIN CSU
THESIS, IS THAT THE TRANSCRIPT WAS RELEASED IN ORDER TO
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SMEAR STRAUSS AND THEREBY OFFSET THE RECENT CONCLUSION
BY THE FRG WORKING GROUP, THAT IT HAD FOUND NO EVIDENCE
THAT LOCKHEED HAD BRIBED, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY,
PERSONS OR PARTIES IN THE FRG (REF B).

C. SOME CIRCLES SEE A PROVOCATION BY EASTERN
AGENTS -- A VIEW WHICH GUENTHER NOLLAU, THE FORMER HEAD
OF THE FEDERAL OFFICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE CONSTI-

TUTION, REPORTEDLY SHARES.

D. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT APPEARS UNCERTAIN OF ALL THE FACTS, BUT IS CLEARLY WORRIED OVER THE POLITICAL FALLOUT THAT MIGHT ENSURE. FOR THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT, THE HANDLING OF THIS AFFAIR IS MAINLY A DAMAGE-LIMITING EXERCISE.

9. IN CONTRAST TO THE RUMORS WHICH ABOUNDED AT THE TIME OF THE 1974 BUGGING (PARA 6 ABOVE), WE HAVE HEARD AS YET NO CLAIM THAT THE USG HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE WIRETAP ON STRAUSS'S PHONE. HOWEVER, A HIGH CSU OFFICIAL (HEUBL, HEAD OF THE BAVARIAN OFFICE IN BONN), HAS ALREADY DRAWN THE PARALLEL TO WATERGATE, A UNIQUELY AMERICAN DRAMA. IT IS THUS CONCEIVABLE THAT, AS THIS AFFAIR DRAWS ON, SOME MAY SEEK TO PUT THE BLAME ON THE USG.
STOESSEL

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